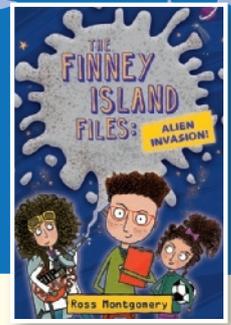


The Finney Island Files: Alien Invasion!

Ross Montgomery



Book overview

In this book, Ash discovers an alien plot to take over Finney Island. He is suspicious when his scatterbrained parents change completely after attending a fancy dinner. Ash discovers that his parents have been replaced by robots. Ash, his sister Tabitha, and their Aunt Emmy, an eccentric inventor, set out to save the world, but the plot is left unresolved at the end of the book.

This author tells a fast-moving story with a cliffhanger ending that will encourage readers to make predictions about what happens next. The children will enjoy the characters of responsible Ash, his disorganised family and crazy inventor Aunt Emmy.

Key words

Discuss these key words with the children to test understanding before reading or as you read.

scatterbrained (p6), **anniversary** (p8), **laboratory** (p11), **aliens** (p13), **mark my words** (p14), **speechless** (p18), **sinister** (p21), **robot** (p26), **circuits** (p27), **patrolling** (p29)

Reading and SPaG* objectives

This text and the suggested activities will support the children to:

- ★ draw inferences such as inferring characters' feelings, thoughts and motives from their actions, and justify inferences with evidence
- ★ predict what might happen from details stated and implied
- ★ recognise the function of inverted commas to punctuate dialogue and use appropriate intonation and expression when reading aloud.

Before reading

Introduce the children to the book by looking at the front and back cover.

- ★ Ask: *What does the cover picture make you think the book will be like?* Note the style of illustration used for the characters. *Does the illustration style remind you of any other books?* The children might suggest that the illustrations make them

think the book will be funny, and the title shows that it deals with an alien invasion.

- ★ The cover illustrations show three of the main characters: Ash, his sister Tabby and their Aunt Emmy. *Can you predict what these characters will be like from looking at their pictures?*
- ★ Read the back-cover blurb together to find out more about the story before you start reading.

During reading

Read the first chapter of the book with the children. Ask: *What are your impressions of the characters in this chapter: Ash, Tabitha, Mum and Dad? What are they like?*

- ★ Ask the children to find evidence in the text to support what they say about the characters. E.g. *How do you know that Tabitha loves sport?*
- ★ Explain to the class that authors will often show us what a character in a story is like by the things they do and say. E.g. Rather than telling us that Ash is organised, the author shows us that Ash has a clipboard with a checklist on it, and he talks about all the jobs he has to do. As readers, we use these details to understand a character.
- ★ *Is there anything unusual about the family in this book?* If necessary, prompt the children to think about who is the most organised character and note that Mum and Dad make a huge mess of making the breakfast.
- ★ Mention Mum and Dad's invitation to a fancy dinner. *Is there anything that seems odd about this invitation? Is it really from the mayor?*

Chapter 2 includes lots of dialogue between the different characters. The children could read this chapter in pairs or small groups. Alternatively, you could help the children to read the dialogue with a varied tone by echoing or choral reading.

- ★ Listen to the children read and encourage them to vary the tone of their voices as they read the dialogue. Ask: *Why are some words in capitals?*
- (P) Look at a sample of dialogue together. *Which are the words that the characters are speaking? How do we know?* Explain that the punctuation marks around direct speech are called 'inverted commas' and they are used at the beginning and end of words that are spoken.



★ *How do we know who is speaking?* The children should note that there is an indication with each piece of direct speech, e.g. 'I said' or 'Emmy said'. Point out that the author starts a new line for each new speaker.

V If we used 'said' all the time, it would be very boring; instead, other verbs can be used to say more about how something was said, whispered or screamed. Ask the children to think about alternative words and complete PCM1. Discuss their responses and compile a class list of words to use instead of 'said'. (Possible alternatives from the text of Chapter 2: *cried, shouted, groaned, scoffed, asked, explained, screamed.*)

Read Chapter 3 with the children. This chapter provides plenty of opportunities to practise inference skills.

★ Encourage the children to recall what the family and characters were like in the first chapter. Ask: *How have Ash's mum and dad changed since the first chapter? How do we know about these changes?*

★ Remind them that the author uses the things the characters do and say to tell us about them. The author can also use these things to move the story along.

★ *What is Ash's reaction to the changes in his parents? How does he feel at the end of the chapter?* Encourage the children to explain that at first he is happy, and pleased with his games console, but later he starts to get worried that something is wrong and notices that his parents are not blinking (page 21).

Before reading the final two chapters of the book, ask the children what they expect to happen in the story. Ask: *Why are Mum and Dad acting so strangely? Will Ash spend the rest of his life playing on his games console?*

★ Read the remaining two chapters as a class or ask the children to read them independently.

★ Discuss details of the story: *What has happened to Ash's parents? Why do you think all the children were given games consoles?* Discussing the last question – and that the children were so

busy gaming they forgot to look around them – might lead to a brief discussion of the issues around gaming and screen time.

★ You could also spend some time discussing Aunt Emmy and her lighthouse laboratory.

★ *Did the story end as you expected it to? Did anything happen that surprised you?*

★ Allow some time for the children to talk about their predictions for the next stage of the story. *Are there any clues in the text to help us predict what will happen next?*

★ Use PCM2 to test the children's comprehension of the story. The checklist focuses on inference and prediction skills. You could discuss the questions as a class or the children could complete the sheet themselves or with a partner.

Reading for pleasure

As part of your discussion at the end of the book, encourage the children to discuss whether they liked the book. You could rate the book as a class alongside the other books you've read.

★ Ask: *What did you like about the book?*

Prompt them to think about characters, such as Aunt Emmy and her crazy inventions, or the exciting story.

★ *Was there anything that you would change about the book?*

★ *Can you think of any other books like this that you've enjoyed?*

Follow-up activities

The book ends on a cliffhanger, leaving readers in suspense. You could discuss other stories that work in a similar way, such as a series of books or TV programmes where a story is told over several episodes.

The children could create a storyboard to show what happens next. Will Ash, Tabby and Emmy defeat the aliens? What's happened to Mum and Dad? The storyboard could be used as a plan for the children to write a continuation of the story.

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Name: _____ Date: _____

Ways of saying

When we read speech, the author will show who is speaking by adding ‘I said’ or ‘said Aunt Emmy’.

The verb ‘say’ or ‘said’ is very useful. But writers can use lots of other verbs that tell us about how things are said – from whispering to screaming.

- 1 How many different verbs can you find in Chapter 2 that are used instead of ‘said’?
- 2 Write the verbs you find on the line below, from the quietest to the loudest.

Quiet

Loud



- 3 Can you think of any other verbs that you could use to describe how a character said something?

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How to defeat an alien invasion

Ash is very organised and likes to write checklists. Help him to defeat the alien invasion by completing this checklist. You'll find the clues in the book. Come up with your own ideas to defeat the aliens.

1 How can you tell that aliens are invading?

a *Invitations from the mayor with the word 'Earthlings' crossed out.*

b _____

c _____

2 Write the signs that show your parents have been replaced by robots.

a _____

b _____

c _____

d _____

e _____

3 Ways to defeat the aliens:

a *Use Emmy's soup zapper to stick them to the floor.*

b _____

c _____